

Golden Gate Audubon Society Newsletter

Volume 81, No. 9 October 1999

## Teens Teach about the Endangered California Least Tern

This spring, the Friends of the Alameda Wildlife (FAWR) committee, of the Golden Gate Audubon Society, initiated a High School Docent Program in partnership with Encinal High School. Fourteen high school students, from Dan Horowitz' Marine Biology class, teamed up with FAWR volunteer docents to give presentations in 74 Alameda public elementary

school classrooms. The high school students taught young children about the endangered California Least Tern and their nesting habits at the Alameda Wildlife Refuge. The program allowed FAWR to double the number of classrooms that were visited and gave High School students an opportunity to explore, first hand, careers in natural sciences and teaching.



*Monique Trinidad, a junior at Encinal High School, leads a feather activity.*



# Field Trips Calendar

**G**AS field trips are conducted by experienced birders who wish to share their knowledge and love of birds with others. All trips are free of charge (except for entrance fees that may be charged by regional, state, or national parks) and are open to everyone, regardless of membership in the National Audubon Society or Golden Gate chapter.

**SATURDAY OCTOBER 2,  
HAWK HILL, MARIN COUNTY.**

See September Gull for details. Leader: Stefanie Arthur (415) 587-9282.

**SUNDAY OCTOBER 3,  
STRYBING ARBORETUM.**

See November 7<sup>th</sup> trip for details. Leaders: Allan Ridley and Helen McKenna (415) 566-3241.

**SUNDAY OCTOBER 10,  
END OF GRANT STREET,  
SAN LEANDRO.**

From Berkeley, take 880 south. In San Leandro you will arrive at a point where the 238 Frwy begins (the 238 going to towards 580). Stay in the rightmost lane and leave the 880 as if heading towards 238. Almost right away you will see a Washington Ave. exit on the right. Take the Washington exit. At the base of that offramp, you will be on Beatrice. Turn left on Beatrice then right on Washington. Head south on Washington, past Lewelling, to Grant Ave. Turn

right on Grant and take Grant all the way to the end. There is a small East Bay Regional Park parking lot next to a restaurant called Mei Ling's. We meet there at 8 a.m. for a half day trip. We hope to see shorebirds. Leader: Rusty Scalf (510) 666-9936. E-mail: Rscalf@jps.net

**WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 13,  
MINI TRIP TO EAST BAY  
SHORELINE.**

See September Gull for details. Leaders: Anna Wilcox (510) 351-9301 and Jean-Marie Spoelman.

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 16,  
TWELFTH ANNUAL POINT  
REYES NATIONAL SEASHORE  
ALL-DAY FALL BIRDING  
BLITZ (JOINT ACTIVITY:  
GGAS & NATIONAL PARK  
SERVICE.)**

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at Five Brooks Trailhead parking lot (about 3.5 miles south of Olema on Highway 1). This fast paced multi-habitat trip covers the Five Brooks Pond area, Limantour Spit, Drakes Beach, Chimney Rock and Point Reyes, ending at Bear Valley. producing approximately 100 species. Bring food, water, and layered clothing for variable weather. Leaders: Leon Abrams (415) 453-9980 (work), (510) 843-4107 (home); and Cathy Purchis (510)865-9482. (\*)

**SATURDAY OCTOBER 16,  
SAN MATEO COAST.**

Meet at 9 a.m. in the parking lot of San Gregorio State Beach (near the junction of Highways 1 and 84). We plan on birding at Pescadero in the morning and Ano Nuevo in the afternoon. We will look for migrants, shorebirds and seabirds, including Marbled Murrelet and Black-vented Shearwater. Bring lunch and liquids and be prepared for cool weather. Heavy rain cancels. Beginners welcome. Leader: Alan Hopkins (415) 664-0983. (\$)\*

**SUNDAY OCTOBER 24,  
LAS GALLINAS SEWER  
PONDS (MARIN COUNTY).**

Meet at 9:30 a.m. Take 101 north and exit at Lucas Valley Drive/Smith Ranch Road. Go east on Smith Ranch Road, turn left just before the county park, and proceed to the entrance where parking is available. We will begin this trip by birding the road before the parking lot. We should see a variety of wintering shorebirds and waterfowl on this joint GGAS and Sierra Club trip. Bring water and snacks. Trip will end by 1:00. Beginners welcome. Rain cancels. Leader: Jeffrey Black (510) 526-7068. (\*)

**SUNDAY NOVEMBER 7,  
STRYBING ARBORETUM.**

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the front gate of the Arboretum (9th Ave. and Lincoln Way) for this regular 1st Sunday of the month half-day

## Volunteer As An Environmental Educator With FAWR

trip. The Strybing Arboretum is a delightful section of Golden Gate Park, with several "micro-habitats" attracting a varied array of resident, migrant and vagrant birds. Beginners and all others welcome. Leaders: Allan Ridley and Helen McKenna (415) 566-3241

### **WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 10, MINI-TRIP TO AQUATIC PARK, BERKELEY, AND OTHER NEARBY AREAS.**

Meet at 9:30 a.m. in the northwest corner of parking lot of the former Spenger's Restaurant (4th and Hearst St.) to carpool. We should see returning shorebirds and migratory ducks. Lunch optional. Rain cancels trip. Beginners welcome. Leaders: Anna Wilcox (510)351-9301 and Jean-Marie Spoelman.

### **Plan Ahead:**

**1)** Sunday November 21, Corte Madera Marsh, Jeff Black.

**2)** December 11-12, Gray Lodge/Sacramento Wildlife Refuges w/ Steve and Renee Margolin.

Trips marked with a (\$) go to parks or other sites which require an entrance fee. Carpooling arrangements will be attempted by leader for trips marked with a (\*). Problems, etc.: If you need a ride or can take a passenger (even if a trip is not marked with an (\*)), if you need information and have difficulty reaching a field trip leader, if you have suggestions for trips, or if you are interested in leading a trip, call Lillian Fujii (510) 236-4167, Field Trips Committee Chair.

**P**articipate in an environmental education project for 2nd through 5th grade Alameda Public School students. The program connects kids to their natural environment, and helps empower students to participate in protecting and enhancing bird populations, other wildlife and ecosystems of the refuge.

Volunteers are teamed up to work with students on the refuge and/or in classrooms. Each volunteer leads an interactive learning activity with a small group of children. Volunteers will also be given the option of giving slide show presentations.

We are looking for people that appreciate nature and enjoy

working with children and people in general.

No previous experience is needed. The minimum time commitment is four hours per month. Ten hours of training is offered through the College of Alameda. Optional enrichment classes will be offered.

For more information: Contact the FAWR Education Coordinator, Amy Mayeno at (510) 748-2129

**Important Note:** Eleven volunteers signed up to volunteer at the April GGAS general meeting. This list was misplaced and never made it to the FAWR office. If you signed up at that time, please contact Amy Mayeno.

## Field Trips Reports

### *Hayward Shoreline*

**T**he trip began with a good study of Black-necked Stilt chicks and nervous, vocal parents near the Interpretive Center. Least Sandpipers were around in good numbers. Western Sandpipers were scarce. We had a good look at two juvenile Snowy Plovers on salt flats west of the trail. Some of our party were able to see two Black Skimmers fly in and disappear behind a dike. Unfortunately, they did not reappear. Likewise, a Least Tern flew in briefly, then went back out to the Bay. A pair of Black Turnstones were studied on rocks near Johnson's Landing. Red-necked Phalaropes were seen in the secondary treatment pond near the Forster's Tern breeding colony island. One Red Knot was spotted. All in all, most of the expected shorebirds were seen. A very pleasant day and trip. Submitted by Lewis Cooper, trip leader, August 7, 1999 (15 participants, 45 species).



## Montana In July

All together now. Repeat after me. "We live in the most diverse state in the union. We are spoiled. We compare our birding to other states and countries based upon our excellent and varied habitats. In terms of sheer number of species, only Texas surpasses us. There are other entire countries which have more bird species. We are particularly blessed in northern California. We are definitely spoiled."

That said, why am I usually disappointed when I visit another state and fail to have a birding experience which doesn't live up to my expectations? A good portion of the problem seems to be my timing. In many other states, bird migrations account for some of their spectacular numbers and varieties of birds, so spring and/or fall are the key times to look skyward. Even California's most interesting sightings occur during migration, especially the unexpected bird species. There was the infamous trip to Cape May, N. J. on the weekend "they" anticipated to be the peak of fall migration. Whoops! We were "lucky" to spot a fast-disappearing peregrine and a flicker. I didn't even meet my hero, Pete Dunne. That is my husband's prime example of a proverbial goose chase.

We visited northwestern Montana in July. I had high hopes of seeing hoards of bald eagles, scads of hawks, many insect-eating flycatchers gobbling the multitude of juicy bugs,

woodpeckers galore, and sparrows everywhere. WRONG! We got excited over Canada Geese, any little brown bird perched on a fence (one COULD have been a McCown's Longspur) and only on the last day did we spot the state bird, the Western Meadowlark.

Birds were few and far between. While on a boat on Flathead Lake we saw a huge nest complete with Bald Eagle. We had to rent a boat to see it but it kept us interested for the day! On one hike we spent a long time viewing a Cedar Waxwing which cooperated by flycatching and perching for long moments. My sister from Florida loved it and I think they are among the most beautiful of birds, but they hang out in my yard all winter! While in a national bird refuge we had a few goodies: a beautiful Lewis' Woodpecker (named after Merriweather Lewis—we were in Lewis & Clark country after all); a Spotted Sandpiper in full courting regalia (we see them in their drab winter attire); a muskrat plying a pond; a Bullock's Oriole; and best of all, an adult Great-Horned Owl with 2 fluffy young who were sitting like big bumps on a fallen log.

Glacier Park was magnificent but not a creature was stirring. Not a grizzly, mountain goat, a mountain sheep, a moose or an elk. We got excited over the marmots and the wildflowers. Of course, the day before had been a different matter: teeming masses of goats were in the parking lot

and a grizzly bear cruised around a meadow! We reached Many Glaciers Hotel, situated on a lake and backed by awesome peaks. Even though there was a hurricane force wind, we ambled around the lake and tried to pish up some birds. They, too, were hunkered down, probably hanging onto limbs with death grips. Among the white caps we spotted some Common Mergansers and 3 female Redheads on the lake. So much for a Western Tanager landing on my head!

On the drive from Glacier to Great Falls a few hawks soared over the grasslands: Red-tailed, Northern Harrier, Swainson's and Ferruginous. It broke the monotony but it was slim pickings.

We spent 2 nights with friends at their idyllic spot near Butte. Even though we were above 6,000 feet, birding picked up. They had several huge hummingbird feeders and I could practically touch Rufous and Calliope Hummingbirds at their feeders. It was like star wars with up to 15 hummers buzzing about at the same time. A flock of Black-capped Chickadees worked the willows for insects as did an Orange-crowned Warbler. The most frequently heard bird was a flycatcher which sounded much like my Pacific slope Flycatcher. But we were on the other side of the Continental Divide. So was it a Willow Flycatcher instead? I know the Willow Flycatcher is in that area too and I doubt they sound the same. I got a good look

## GGAS Seeks Part-time Administrative Assistant/Office Manager

**H**elp! We need someone to help us run our office and keep our efforts on track. Caroline Kim, our Office Assistant, is leaving after several years of wonderful work. We're going to miss her and we are desperately in need of someone to help out our Executive Director, Arthur Feinstein, in running the office.

We need someone with the ability to handle projects that range from the serious to the mundane enthusiastically and independently. This is a position for a self-starter who is

willing to take the reins and make decisions. It's a small office setting, but with numerous and interesting daily outside contacts. Tasks include: membership database maintenance, seed and book sales, volunteer event support, calendar, mail and phones. Microsoft Word a must, familiarity with Access helpful. Approximately 12 hours a week, \$15/hr.

If you are interested and want more information please call the office at 510-843-2222.

through my binoculars and it sure looked like "my" bird. With no local expert at hand, I'd say it was a Pacific Slope. They are on a small lake so I wasn't surprised to see another Spotted Sandpiper. A Great Blue heron dropped in one morning, surprising our hosts who had never seen him on the lake before.

When we returned home, there they were all of my feathered friends, so familiar to me. The best parts of going away are coming home and, after a while remembering what a great time you had on vacation. I enjoyed

my Black-headed Grosbeaks for a few weeks before they left for their winter vacation in southern climes. It's time to hit the beaches for the shorebirds' return from breeding in Alaska and Canada. Above Bodega Bay there were the Brown Pelicans, floating, diving, perched all over the fog-shrouded rocks. I've never seen so many! There must have been a population explosion on their breeding grounds in the south. Yeah! Back from the brink of extinction! Ah! I am definitely prejudiced: California, I love you! Meg Pauletich

## Donations

**Clapper Rail** (\$100 or more): Jan H. Smith.

**Gifts** (under \$100): Janice M. Brooks with match from Raychem Corporation, Judith N. Long, Robert Coon, Patti Roberts, and Robert Freidenberg through a Bank of America Matching Gifts Program.

**Other Gifts**  
Hugh Harvey in support of **The Bird Box**.

Jean Conner and Debra Love Sharwater of Shearwater Journeys for **Save the Quail**.  
In appreciation from **Dan Murphy's** Mt Lassen group.

**In Memoriam:**  
The following donations were made in the memory of **John Rex Pierce**: Reno and Anna Dagna, The Miyamoto Family, Juanita Goodrich, L.E. Narvaez, Joseph Meneghelli, Teresa and Cecile Meneghelli, Mrs. Tulane Carrington, Lanelle Stanley and family.

Donations in the memory of **Tim Brauch** were made by David Barr and Ultimate Skateboard Distributors.

Lavonne Ann Hynes in memory of **William K. Hynes**.

Karen San Martin in memory of **Robert Jorritsma**.

The Society Welcomes gifts in general or gifts in honor of or in memory of relatives and friends. Such gifts will be used as specified by the donor or, if unspecified, at the discretion of the GGAS Board of Directors. This includes their use of general GGAS activities or for special programs of the Society. Please send your gift in the form of a check made out to Golden Gate Audubon Society, 2530 San Pablo Avenue, Suite G, Berkeley, CA 94702. All gifts are tax deductible. The Society is also appreciative of any bequests. Such bequests should specify as recipient the Golden Gate Audubon Society, Inc. All gifts, donations and bequests will be acknowledged in The Gull, as well as personally on behalf of the Society by the Secretary.

## Part I

# They Came By Sea: Early Birding in California

By Harry Fuller

One of the earliest written accounts of California birdlife is over 200 years old. Spanish Jesuit Miguel Venegas compiled a *Natural and Civil History of California*. His book used others' observations and was published after his death in 1758. He was encouraging settlement and missionary work along the Pacific coast at a time when the few missions in Baja were still new.

During the late 1700s the Spanish government was increasingly worried that Russian claims to the north would encroach on the valuable colony of Mexico. The Spanish saw California as a useful buffer. Just eleven years after Venegas's book, the first mission was begun in Alta California: San Diego, 1769.

Venegas listed over 30 types of bird found in California. He says there was an "infinite variety." Though Linnaeus had published his first *Systema Naturae* in 1735, it is unlikely Venegas would have used or even known of such a work written in Protestant northern Europe. Venegas has no inkling of the concept of "species." His descriptions and names are highly colloquial.

His list includes: herons, quails, geese, ducks, vultures, sparrows, goldfinches, blackbirds, horn-owls, ravens, crows, thrushes, swallows, cormorants and gulls. These are general descriptions that would have been familiar to Europeans, though we now know many of the species are unique to the New World. The "blackbird" was one of our Ictirids, not closely related to the European Blackbird, a thrush

that behaves much like his fellow *Turdus*, the American Robin. The European Robin is a spry little bird in another branch of the Thrush family. His friendliness led English-speaking settlers to name native birds "robin" in all parts of the globe.

Among the gulls, Venegas includes a bird with this description: "They have a vast craw, which in some hangs down like the leather bottles used in Peru for carrying water; and in it they put their captures to carry them to their young ones."

Venegas has already explained these "gulls" eat fish. Clearly he is describing the Brown Pelican. Venegas says they were seen in great numbers.

The 240-year old English translation of Venegas raises some interesting identity problems: "Among those [birds] which serve for the table are turtles [sic], herons, quails, pheasants..."

Eating a heron or egret was once commonly done, even by Audubon and his contemporaries. "Turtle" was a common archaic English shortening of the name "turtledove." The Turtledove would have been a well-known European species. Any general observer might have mistaken our Mourning Dove for the Turtledove (*Streptopelia turtur*).

"Pheasant" as differentiated from quail could indicate there were once grouse living along the California coast. Perhaps the Sage Grouse, or perhaps they did not connect the male and female California Quail as being the same species? In one account of the

birds of "Monte-Rey" Venegas describes "other birds resembling turkey-cocks: the latter were the largest we ever saw." If this is the right Monterey (and not the one on the Gulf Coast of Mexico), it might indicate the Sage Grouse once populated our coast, before the missions and early ranchers turned sheep and cattle loose on land. The real Wild Turkey is not supposed to have been a native to California.

The birds of prey Venegas lists are hawks, falcons and ossifrages, the latter an archaic word for Osprey which would have been familiar to any sailor in the Northern Hemisphere. He then goes on to describe, "another kind called *auras*, of excellent use in keeping cities clean, leaving no dead carcase in the streets, whither they repair early every morning." A quick insight into the relation between our Turkey Vulture and the Native American villages the explorers would have seen along California's coast.

Venegas also claims larks and nightingales for California. Meadowlarks? Horned Larks? Swainson's Thrush? Some songsters that reminded homesick sailors of bird sounds back in Europe. For "Monte-Rey" he also lists: "bustards, peacocks, linnets, partridges, water wagtails, mews [as opposed to gulls]."

The bustard of Europe is closely related to our rails. This could have been the Sora, Virginia or Clapper, all which would have been common in the coastal marshes.

Linnet was likely the House and

Purple Finch lumped together. Water Wagtails could have referred to almost any or all shorebirds. Peacock? A species or gender of quail? The Partridge might well have been the Band-tailed Pigeon which would have been abundant in those near virgin oak and pine forests. The "mew" could have been one of the smaller gulls or even the terns that would have been very obvious at Monterey.

## Captain Cook

In 1776, The Spanish founded San Francisco, their northernmost American outpost at that time. The American colonies issued their Declaration of Independence at Philadelphia. British explorer, Captain James Cook, was on his third and fatal voyage to the Pacific. He first came near the North American coast in central Oregon, then sailed north all the way to the Arctic Ocean. Though he by passed California, his naturalists collected and drew pictures of many Pacific coast birds still unknown back in Europe (and in the American colonies). It was the first organized attempt to collect new plants and animals in the northeast Pacific since Steller's few days ashore a generation earlier.

Cook was killed in Hawaii, but his expedition returned to England in 1780 with over 200 bird specimens and over 100 bird and animal drawings by two artists taken on the expedition. From that evidence a number of new species were identified: Varied Thrush, Marbled Murrelet, Golden-crowned Sparrow, Rufous

Hummingbird, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Wandering Tattler, Song Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Lesser Yellowlegs, Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel, Fox Sparrow. British naturalists quickly published lists and descriptions from the expeditions' notes but did not assign scientific names. This allowed Johann Gmelin (1748-1804) to give these birds their scientific (Latin) names in his 13<sup>th</sup> edition of Linneaus' *Systema Naturae* in 1788. Thus Gmelin "got credit" for many birds he'd never seen. British naturalists never repeated their oversight.

The chief naturalist on the Cook voyage made one mistake that was not corrected for over a generation. He thought the Black Oystercatcher of Pacific North America was the same bird he'd seen in New Zealand. That mistake was corrected by Audubon in 1839, using a specimen from Oregon carried back to Philadelphia by John Kirk Townsend.

Most of the specimens from Cook's expedition are lost, though a few survive in continental museums, including a sadly deteriorated Marbled Murrelet, the type specimen now in the Vienna Museum. The historic bird drawings from the expedition never got published in color, though a few tiny black and white reproductions have been allowed by the British Museum of Natural History, which holds the surviving originals.

## Pallas's List

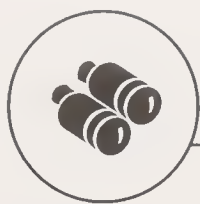
The next major contribution to

a complete listing of Pacific coastal birds came from a series of Russian-sponsored expeditions from Kamchatka to Alaska and northwestern Canada. The commander was Joseph Billings and his chief naturalist was Dr. Carl Merck, a German physician. They made summer trips from 1785-1794.

Dr. Merck (1767-1799) was born in Darmstadt, Germany, but spent most of his adult life working for the Russian government, and was once surgeon to the grandchildren of Empress Catherine of Russia. It was long believed that Merck's own notes and diary from the series of voyages was lost, but it turned up in a Berlin bookstore earlier this century. It was among papers passed down through generations of Dr. Peter Simon Pallas's progeny. Never published nor translated, the Merck journal is now in the Darmstadt archives.

Pallas published his classic *Zoographia Russo-Asiatica* in 1811, the same year he died at age 70. He was the pre-eminent explorer and naturalist of his day in Eurasia, and spent most of his years working in Russia. In his final work Pallas named and described twenty species and several sub-species that were new to science, often using the specimens, letters and journal of his friend, Merck. Birds most often seen in California: Rhino Auklet, Hermit Thrush, Pigeon Guillemot, Red-throated Pipit, Cassin's Auklet, Lapland Longspur, Northern Phalarope, Red-throated Phalarope.

*Continued next month*



June 25 - August 27, 1999

Reports of unusual species were infrequent early in the period, but picked up significantly after mid-July. The late summer influx of shorebirds such as sandpipers and golden-plovers was much in evidence, but comparatively few Wood Warbler or other landbird migrants had been reported as of the end of the period. Nine sightings of seven review species occurred and only two of them were landbird species.

## Albatrosses to Boobies.

The observations lead off with what was surely the best bird of the summer: a Shy Albatross (*Thalassarche cauta*) was well-documented on an Aug. 24 pelagic trip out of Bodega Bay (DLSh). This albatross is a bird of the southern oceans and the only member of its family to breed in Australia (Tasmania). Dark-backed Albatross species in that part of the world are referred to by seafarers as "Mollymawks", originating from a Dutch word meaning "foolish gull". This species has a characteristic small black triangle at the leading base of the underside of the wing. There are no previous CA records of this

species, and only two accepted North American records. Photographs and audio and video recordings of this sighting are being submitted to the CBRC for review (see Joe Morlan's Website for the video). A Laysan Albatross was offshore in HUM county waters on Aug. 7 (R). Reports of Black-footed Albatross were abundant, coming from HUM, MTY, SCZ, and SON county waters, with high counts of 359 from a July 21 Monterey Bay pelagic trip and 204 on an Aug. 1 SCZ county pelagic outing (DLSh). A second rare albatross sighting was an immature Short-tailed Albatross (*Phoebastria albatrus*) found 15 miles offshore of MTY Aug. 7 (DLSh). As discussed previously, due to extirpation by plume-hunters this is one of the rarest of albatrosses, reduced to about 10 pairs by 1953 (Harrison, 1985). Just this May, there were two other sightings of this species in MTY county waters (see the July Gull), and another was seen over the waters of Bodega Canyon in August of 1998.

Twenty-five Northern Fulmars were spotted on a July 10 Monterey Bay pelagic trip. High count for Pink-footed Shearwaters was 240 on an Aug. 27 trip in SCZ county waters (DLSh), and 32 were also reported from Bodega Canyon July 25 (DLSh). Other pelagic sightings came from HUM, MTY, and SM counties. Two Manx Shearwater (*Puffinus puffinus*) reports came from MTY county waters, on Aug. 11 (DLSh) and Aug. 26 (RTE, JM). A Wilson's Storm-Petrel was seen on an Aug. 16 Bodega Bay pelagic outing (DLSh). The first storm-petrel flocks of the season were represented by 721 Ashy Storm-Petrels and 34 Black Storm-Petrels seen on the Aug. 27 pelagic trip in SCZ waters (DLSh). On July 22, a Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*) was discovered at

Castle Rock, MTY, where it remained through July 27 (SB, MOB). This tropical species is a rare and irregular late summer and fall visitor to CA (Small, 1994), with only a few Northern CA records. Most recently, it had been seen at the Farallones in Apr., May, and Oct. of 1998, and at PRNS in June of 1998.

## Hérons to Alcids.

A molting Little Blue Heron was found at Coyote Hills Regional Park, ALA, Aug. 1 and remained through at least Aug. 10 (AW, JR, MOB). This sighting is reported to be a 5th County record. Two adult Little Blue Herons were at Salt Pond A9, Alviso, SCL, Aug. 1-11 (MR, BR); one remained until Aug. 15 (DL). Three Wood Storks, uncommon in Northern California, were seen circling over the I-5/Hwy. 20 interchange, COL, July 24 (ME), and another was sighted July 31 over I-80 W. of Sacramento, YOL (RL). A pair of Harlequin Ducks was near Brooks Island, CC, around Aug. 14 (SG). Five of this species were spending the summer at MacKerricher State Park, MEN, Aug. 11 (DT). An Oldsquaw continued at Moss Landing, MTY, through at least Aug. 12 (TN, MPRBA). Another Oldsquaw reported to be summering in various locales in the Bodega area, SON (Campbell Cove, Bodega Harbor, Doran Beach), was present at least through Aug. 7 (CC, MOB).

Single American Golden-Plovers were found at Pescadero State Beach, SM, July 5 (SRo), at Schoellenberger Park, SON, July 7-10 (LH, DA), at Doran Park, SON, Aug. 5 (JH), and at Abbott's Lagoon, PRNS, MRN, Aug. 16 (KM). A pair of American Golden-Plovers was also reported from Rush Creek Marsh, Novato, MRN, July 8-13 (JW, JP, EG). One to four Pacific Golden-Plovers were at Abbott's

## Wood Warbler Sightings

### Nashville Warbler

Aug. 17 Eureka, HUM L

### Northern Parula

July 19-Aug. 4 AMSP, MTY JB, BH, CH  
Aug. 15 AMSP, MTY MPRBA

### Palm Warbler

June 26 PRNS, MRN LI

### Black-and-white Warbler

July 24 Guadalupe R., SCL MR

Lagoon, PRNS, MRN, July 13-14 (EG, GE, MOB), another one or two were at Pescadero Marsh, SM, Aug. 16-21 (PM, AE, RT), and two were seen at AMSP, MTY, Aug. 26 (JB). Single Pacific Golden-Plovers were spotted at Eureka, HUM, Aug. 17 (D), at Calabazas Ponds, SCL, Aug. 24 (GB), and at the Salinas R. mouth, MTY, Aug. 26 (MPRBA). Pleasing for Snowy Plover watchers were counts of 20 birds at Francis Beach, Half Moon Bay, SM, Aug. 16 (MB), and at least 28 at Hayward Regional Shoreline, ALA, Aug. 21 (LT, SJ, BS). The Snowy Plover is listed as a species of special concern by the State of California. The June, 1999 issue of Birder's World has an interesting comparison of the status of Snowy and Piping Plovers, sibling species that are both endangered by habitat destruction and predation.

Six Individual Solitary Sandpipers were seen in ALP, INY, MON, MTY, PLA, and YOL counties over the period. The one at Indian Creek Reservoir, ALP, Aug. 15 was reported to be a first county record (MF). Uncommon in the summer, two breeding-plumaged Wandering Tattlers were at the Richmond Marina, CC, July 18 (LF), and another was at Asilomar Beach, MTY, July 22 (MPRBA), while six were at the North Jetty, HUM, July 25 (F) and two others were at Pescadero Lagoon, SM, Aug. 1 (TN). Another reported first ALP county record was set by the 22 Long-billed Curlews near Diamond Valley Rd., and Hwy. 89, ALP, July 15 (JL).

The Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*) found south of the Berkeley Marina, ALA, July 8 (BMc) is a Eurasian species and extremely rare visitor with most records in the late summer and fall (Small, 1994). It is ironic that I saw my first Bar-tailed Godwit in its normal habitat on the

Australian coast at the same time one of them was visiting my hometown! A second Bar-tailed Godwit report for Northern California came from King Salmon, HUM, Aug. 27 (N). Five Ruddy Turnstones, uncommon in the interior in July, were reported from Stockton Sewage Ponds, SJ, July 19 (BW). Four Red Knots were seen at Meeker Slough, Richmond, CC, July 11 (LF), one to six at Abbott's Lagoon, PRNS, MRN, July 13-17 (EG, GE, MD), two at Hayward Regional Shoreline, ALA, July 25 (KS), and one other at Pescadero Marsh, SM, Aug. 16 (PM).

Nine Semipalmated Sandpipers were reported over ALA, ALP, PLA, SM, SCL and SON counties, with a high count of three juveniles at Calabazas Marsh in Sunnyvale, SCL, July 31 (MM). Another juvenile at Indian Creeks Reservoir Aug. 21-24 (TE fide JLu, SA) was reportedly a 1st record for ALP County. An early Baird's Sandpiper was in alternate plumage at Princeton Marsh, SM June 26 (RT), but, as expected, by the end of July and through August, at least 30-40 others were reported over several Northern California locations. Single Pectoral Sandpipers were at the Sunnyvale Sewage Ponds, SCL, Aug. 15 (MR), the Carmel R. mouth, MTY, Aug. 20-21 (MPRBA), and at Calabazas Ponds, SCL, Aug. 23 (AE). There was a Juvenile Sharp-tailed Sandpiper at Coast Casey Forebay near Charleston Slough, SCL, Aug. 22 (DJ). Calabazas Ponds, Sunnyvale, SCL, hosted a Stilt Sandpiper Aug. 21-27 (NL fide MM, BR, MOB). Not often seen in August was a Ruff at the intersection of State & Spreckles, Alviso, SCL, Aug. 19 (SRo), and another adult was at the Salinas R. mouth Aug. 21 (MPRBA). High count for Red-necked Phalaropes was a flock of 3150 birds at Salt Pond A15, Alviso, SCL, Aug. 1 (MR).

**Abbreviations for Observers:** SA, Steve Abbott; DA, Dick Ashford; SB, Steve Bailey; GB, George Bing; JB, Jim Booker; MB, Maig Bourret; BB, Bob Brandriff; KC, Karen Converse; CC, Chris Corben; MD, Matthew Dodder; PD, Peter Dramer; D, Deuel; FE, Todd Easterla; ML, Molly Egler; AL, Al Lisner; EL, Elias Elias; GL, Graham Litherington; ML, Mike Leighner; RL, Rob Fowler; F, Freeman; LL, Lillian Fujir; JC, Jim Gam; SG, Steve Glover; JG, Ed Greaves; H, Harris; BHa, Bill Hart; SH, Shawn Hayes; BH, Bill Hill; CH, Craig Hohenberger; ASH, Alan S. Hopkins; JH, Joel Hornstein; LH, Lisa Hug; JLu, John Lutz; DJ, Dave Johnson; SJ, Sheila Junge; AK, Al Kurtz; EL, Earl Lebow; LLeskw, NL, Nick Lethaby; DL, David Lewis; LL, Leslie Lurance; RL, Randy Little; JL, Jim Lomax; JLu, John Luther; MM, Mike Mammoser; MOB, Many Observers; JM, John Mariana; KM, Kevin McKereghan; BM, Bob Meese; PM, Peter Metropulos; BMc, Bo Miller; RM, Richard Mix; N, Nelson; TN, Todd Newberry; MIP, Mike Parmeter; CP, Courtenay Peddle; JP, JD Phillips; RR, Richard Redmond; BR, Bob Reiling; BRe, Bob Richmond; JR, Jean Richmond; SR, Steve Rovell; MR, Mike Rogers; SRo, Steve Rottenborn; R, Roush; AR, Andrew Rush; PS, Paul Saraceni; BS, Bill Scoggins; DLSh, Debra Love Shearwater; JS, Jim Smith; MS, Merrill Soundout; TS, Fritz Steurer; LS, Larry Stevens; MSt, Michael Stevenson; KS, Kirk Swenson; RTe, Richard Temullo; RT, Ron Thorn; DL, Dorothy Tobkin; LT, Larry Tunstall; GW, Gloria Walker; BW, Bruce Webb; JW, Jim White; AW, Anna Wilcox; RW, Roger Wolfe

**Abbreviations for Counties and others:** ALA, Alameda; ALP, Alpine; AMSP, Andrew Molera State Park; BSOL, Big Sur Ornithology Lab; CBRC, California Bird Record Committee; COL, Colusa; CC, Contra Costa; GGAS, Golden Gate Audubon Society; HUM, Humboldt; INY, Inyo; KIN, Kings; LAS, Lassen; MRN, Marin; MEN, Mendocino; MON, Mono; MTY, Monterey; PLA, Placer; PRNS, Point Reyes National Seashore; SAC, Sacramento; SJ, San Joaquin; SM, San Mateo; SCL, Santa Clara; SCZ, Santa Cruz; SIS, Siskiyou; SON, Sonoma; TUO, Tuolumne; YOL, Yolo.

The Aug. 27 pelagic trip in SCZ waters recorded 5 South Polar Skuas. Long-tailed Jaegers were found on 3 pelagic outings: one bird on Aug. 1, SCZ (DLSh), 8 on an Aug. 22 trip, MTY (JB), and 5 on Aug. 27, SCZ (DLSh). A Laughing gull, unusual for MTY county, was at the Salinas R. Mouth Aug. 25 (JB, MPRBA). A Franklin's Gull was seen at Arcata, HUM, Aug. 19-26 (H, N, EE). At Roberts Lake, MTY, seven Heermann's Gull fledglings from the first successful nesting of the species in CA were ready to fly by June 26 (MPRBA). A Sabine's Gull was reported close to shore on Mendocino Bay, MEN, Aug. 21 (DT). Reports of Black-legged Kittiwakes on beaches and river mouths continued to be fairly abundant, with 50-185 seen near Pescadero and Gazos Creeks, SM, July 5-24 (SRo, PS), 50 or more found at the Carmel River mouth, MTY (MPRBA, Paul Saraceni), and two at Gazos Creek Beach, SCZ, Aug. 16 (MB).

Two adult Royal Terns, uncommon in central CA, were at Ano Nuevo State Reserve, SM, July 26 (PM). The Arctic Tern x Forster's Tern hybridization reported last month from Hayward Regional Shoreline, ALA,

*Continued next page*

produced three chicks by July 8 (PD, BRi). The first Arctic Tern flock of the season comprising 36 birds was seen on an Aug. 8 MTY pelagic outing (DLSh). High count for Least Terns was over 100 at Crittenden Marsh, SCL (BR fide MR), and a Black Tern was at Moonglow Dairy, MTY, Aug. 17-18 (SR, CH, RW). Black Skimmers definitely seem to be expanding their range. They were reported from eight locations: one or two at Moss Landing Wildlife Area, MTY, June 23-26 & Aug. 16 (MPRBA), two to five at the Pajaro R. mouth, MTY, July 24-Aug. 17 (TN, SR, CH), one at Coyote Hills Regional Park, ALA, July 25-Aug. 9 (JHu, LT, MOB), five at the Salinas R. mouth, MTY, Aug. 17 (MPRBA), two near Johnson's Landing, Hayward Regional Shoreline, ALA, July 25 and Aug. 7 (GGAS group, KS), single birds near Pt. Isabel, CC, Aug. 8 (RM), and at Martis Marsh, Corte Madera, MRN, Aug. 8 (MS), and another pair at the Limantour Beach, PRNS, MRN, Aug. 7 (BM). Horned Puffins, rare in the summer, were seen on MTY pelagic trips: two on Aug. 7-8, and single birds on Aug. 11 and 21 (DLSh); another was spotted off Ft. Bragg, MEN, Aug. 11 (DT), and one more was found on a pelagic trip out of Bodega Bay, SON, Aug. 25 (DLSh).

### Doves to Grackles.

A White-winged Dove was spotted flying over Moonglow Dairy, MTY, Aug. 20 (EL). Good news for Arrowhead Marsh, ALA, birdwatchers was a nest with two Burrowing Owlets found July 23 (CP). A Common Nighthawk, unusual in the Central Valley, was seen at the intersection of Russell and Arlington Rds., YOL, Aug. 27 (SH). A Whip-poor-will was reported from the White Mountains, INY, Aug. 4 (JG). It was with Common Poorwills and

Common Nighthawks and is a rare and local summer visitor, with very few Northern California records (Small, 1994). A Red-headed Woodpecker (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*), was seen and photographed at Chimney Rock, PRNS, MRN, July 17 (JS). If accepted, this find would be a 5th state and 2nd Northern CA record for this eastern and midwestern U.S. species. On the subject of woodpeckers, it should be noted that the Pileated Woodpecker at L. Anza, ALA, reported in the last Gull was found by Mary Beth Stowe, not Mike Feighner.

A Willow Flycatcher was at the Ragel Ranch Regional Park, SON, Aug. 20 (CC), and appropriately, another three were discovered at Willow Creek, HUM, Aug. 24 (L). A pair of Gray Flycatchers was at Cloud River Falls, SIS, July 18 (LS), and one was singing near Warm Springs, MON, July 22 (PM). There was an Eastern Kingbird off Dillard Rd., SAC, June 27 (SA), and another along Meraville Rd., LAS, July 17 (RR). A Yellow-throated Vireo (*Vireo flavifrons*) was banded, photographed and released by BSOL, MTY, July 28 (JB). The same bird was re-captured and released again on July 31, but found again on Aug. 3 and 4 (BH, CH, RF). A resident of the eastern half of the U. S., this species is extremely rare in coastal Central CA, with most records in spring and fall (Small, 1994), and may represent a second MTY Co. record. A Red-eyed Vireo was singing along Caron R. Road, ALP, July 11 (TE). Two Steller's Jays at Stowe Lake, SF, July 31 were quite rare for the summer at that location and continued through the period (AK, ASID). Six Purple Martins at the Carmel R. Mouth, June 26 were unusual for that location (MPRBA). A pair of Le Conte's Thrashers was near Fish Slough Springs, MON, Aug. 2 &

18 (JL, AR). This sighting, if documented, would be only about the second record of this species in Northern CA for the past two decades, the last being in KIN county in 1980 (McCaskie et al, 1988).

Wood Warbler reports were sparse (see chart), although the first confirmed successful nesting of Northern Parulas at AMSP, MTY, was of interest. The BSOL there has banded six Northern Parulas so far this year, including a hatchling. A Summer Tanager was found in Carmichael, SAC, July 15 (KC, SA), and another was near San Gregorio, SM, July 5 (RT). A Rose-breasted Grosbeak delighted observers at a feeder in Berkeley, ALA, July 1-5 (BB). One male Rose-breasted Grosbeak was at the Carmel R. mouth, MTY, July 19 (JB), and another male along Carson R. Road, ALP, Aug. 21-22 (BHa fide JL), was reported to be a 2nd county record. There was a pair of Blue Grosbeaks on Tubbs Island, SON, July 21 (MP), and three were found there July 22, including a juvenile (MSt). Eight Blue Grosbeaks were in Hammil Valley, MON, July 25 (PM). The two male Indigo Buntings along Carson R. Road, ALP, July 1-18 may be a 1st county record (JL, TE, MF). Another adult male Indigo Bunting was reported from Long Ridge OSP, SM, July 15 (BR). An adult male Dickcissel was seen July 24-26 near the Guadalupe River, SCL (MR, MM, BR). A Yellow-headed Blackbird, uncommon on the coast in summer, was at the Baylands Duck Pond, SCL, July 22 (GW). Great-tailed Grackles continue their conspicuous presence: A female carrying nesting material was seen near Hwy. 120, TUO, July 17 (SG), 15 or more were at Camden Park in Elk Grove, SAC, July 21 (TE), 6 continued at Benton Hot Springs, MON, July 24 (PM), and a pair was near Honey Lake Refuge, LAS, July 9 (FS).

# Are We Doing Anything to Protect Our Natural World? You Bet!

One of the most frequent complaints about our organization is that we don't keep you, our members, sufficiently informed about what we are doing. Well, part of the problem is that those of us who are doing things are so busy we don't have time to write Gull articles. If any of you are interested in honing your writing skills give us a call and help us write up what the Board and Conservation Committee are doing!

Well, what have we been up to? Thanks to John Bowers of our East Bay Conservation Committee, when Oakland passed its new General Plan for the Oakland Estuary it included wonderful and exciting provisions for restoring wetland habi-

tat along the Lake Merritt channel. This is an outstanding opportunity to improve habitat at a site that already hosts the Bay Area's largest concentration of Barrows Goldeneye. As a result, Oakland residents will have a wonderful new wildlife recreation area, and obviously, the birds will benefit from this project. John attended endless meetings and responded to every environmental document released by the City. It took an intense effort but it succeeded. Great work John! And thanks very much to Mayor Jerry Brown who, we are told, strongly supported this proposal.

Orinda's Montanera Project still hovers threateningly over one of the East Bay's most beautiful sites, Gateway Valley. With over 5 miles of streams, and many acres of wetlands and rare seeps, this valley cries out to be preserved. We're doing our best. Helped by several large donations, the GGAS Board has hired legal, scientific and economic specialists to challenge the project, and Board Member Michael Larkin has valiantly read reams of environmental documents and has submitted comment letters throughout the process. It will come to a head this fall, and we hope we will prevail.

In San Francisco we have launched our Save the Quail Campaign. The aim is to save our historic California Quail populations in the park, by addressing the lack of adequate habitat for our State bird. Also in San

Francisco, we played an instrumental role in instigating the restoration of wetlands at Pier 98. In addition, we are now working on the restoration of wetlands at Pier 94.

**Wetlands in San Francisco?** Yes, indeed! And more wetlands than you might imagine. Thanks to our efforts, along with those of several other environmental organizations, we also have great hopes of restoring wetlands at Candlestick Point State Recreation Area, although this won't happen for several years.

There are many important environmental issues in the Bay Area that require the attention and energy of Golden Gate Audubon and its volunteers. Please join us and help make our chapter a strong force for conservation in the Bay Area. We have two Conservation Committees.

Our East Bay Conservation Committee meets the second Monday of every month at 7:30 p.m. in the Berkeley Office (2530 San Pablo Avenue, Suite G). The San Francisco Committee meets the first Monday of the month also at 7:30 p.m. at the homes of members. Please call (510) 843-2222 for the location of the next San Francisco Conservation Committee meeting. We'd love to see you at either of these meetings. Join us in preserving our natural world and having fun as we do it. Hope to see you there!

## Christmas Bird Count Dates

### Mark your calendars now!

Oakland Christmas Bird Count will be held on Sunday, December 19;

the San Francisco Count will be held on Tuesday, December 28.

*Details in next month's Gull.*

## The Birds of the "Southern Cone"

Join us this evening to meet Alvaro Jaramillo, Wildlife Biologist with the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory. Our program will introduce to you the birds of the "Southern Cone", Chile and Argentina, as well as the Antarctic. Alvaro will share with you the wildlife and scenery of these countries, as well as illustrate how ecological relationships and evolution have shaped the birds of this remote part of the world. Of special interest to California birders is that Chile itself has a climate very similar to ours, and in many cases supports the same bird population.

Alvaro was born in Chile, but grew up in Canada. He has been a birder most of his life, starting with ravines and lakefronts in Toronto, Canada. As soon as he was old enough to travel alone, he left home for a few months with his backpack securely fastened,

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Thursday, October 21, 1999

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Refreshments 7:00 p.m.

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Program 7:30 p.m.

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The Josephine Randall Museum  
San Francisco

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and visited the "Southern Cone" of South America, observing Chile through the eyes of a birder. He holds an MS from University of Toronto in Evolution in Ecology. His research led him to an intense fascination with the blackbird clan, which includes orioles and meadowlarks, and culminated in a book published on that subject, "New World Blackbirds: The Icterids" (Princeton University Press). He lives in the birding paradise of Half Moon Bay, and is busy writing a field guide to the birds of Chile.

### WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

As a member of National Audubon Society, you are automatically enrolled in the local chapter, Golden Gate Audubon Society. Chapter benefits include receipt of *The Gull*, access to field trips and programs, and the opportunity to volunteer. Call the office if you have any questions.

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